

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the careful review of this application. Claims 2-5 and 7-9 have been amended. Claims 1 and 6 have been canceled without prejudice. Therefore, claims 2-5 and 7-9 remain pending in this application.

FIGURE OBJECTIONS

The Examiner requested for Figs. 15 and 16 to be updated with a label to indicate them as being prior art. Applicant is supplying the requested replacement figures with this paper. Withdrawal of the objections to Figs. 15 and 16 is therefore respectfully requested.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER / CLAIM OBJECTIONS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for noting the presence of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 5 and 7-9. These claims have been rewritten in independent form as suggested by the Examiner and are therefore allowable. Claims 3 and 4 have been amended to depend upon allowable claim 2 and, therefore, should also be allowable. Applicant respectfully requests that the objections to claims 2, 5 and 7-9 be withdrawn.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) AND 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1 and 3-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Marathe (U.S. Patent No. 4,080,009). Also, claims 1 and 3-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Petersen (U.S. Patent No. 3,994,540). Applicant traverses but respectfully submits that these rejections are rendered moot in light of the present amendment which is presented solely for the purpose expediting the prosecution of the present application.

Applicant reserves the right to re-introduce original and amended claims in continuing applications without limitation or estoppel.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please call the undersigned at the number listed below.

Date: January 16, 2009

Respectfully submitted,
TIPS Group

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul L. Hickman", written over a horizontal line.

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